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On Campus with Max Shulman

(Author of "Rally Round the Flag, Boys!" and "Barefoot Boy With Cheek.")

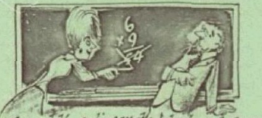
A GUIDE FOR THE GUIDERS

One of the most interesting academic theories advanced in many a long year has recently been advanced by that interesting academic theorist, E. Pluribus Ewbank, Ph.D., who holds the chair of Interesting Academic Theories at the St. Louis College of Footwear and Educational Philosophy. Dr. Ewbank said in the last issue of the learned journal, the *Mount Rushmore Guide to Scholastic Advancement and Presidents' Heads*, that we might be approaching the whole problem bring a fresh, unfettered mind to the subject, just as a mathematician will bring the same kind of approach to poetry.

By way of evidence, Dr. Ewbank cites the case of Cipher Binary, a youth who entered college with brilliant test scores in physics, chemistry, and the calculus. But Dr. Ewbank forced young Cipher to major in poetry.

The results were astonishing. Here, for example, is young Cipher's latest poem, a love lyric of such originality that Lord of student guidance from the wrong direction.

Dr. Ewbank, a highly respected pedagogue and a lifelong smoker of Marlboro Cigarettes, (I mention Marlboros for two reasons: first, to indicate the scope of Dr. Ewbank's brainpower. Out of all the dozens of brands of cigarettes available today, Dr. Ewbank has had the wit and taste to pick the one with the most flavorful flavor, the most filtracious filter, the most soft soft pack, the most flip top Flip Top box: I refer, of course, to Marlboro. The second reason I mention Marlboro is that I get paid to mention Marlboro in this column, and the laborer, you will agree, is worthy of his hire.)


She set the entire math department agog

But I digress. To return to Dr. Ewbank's interesting theory, he contends that most college guidance counselors are inclined to take the easy way out. That is to say, if a student's aptitude tests show a talent for, let us say, math, the student is encouraged to major in math. If his tests show an aptitude for poetry, he is directed toward poetry. And so forth.

All wrong, says Dr. Ewbank. The great breakthroughs, the startling innovations in, let us say, math, are likely to be made *not* by mathematicians—whose thinking, after all, is constrained by rigid rules and principles—but by mavericks, by nonconformists, by intuitors who refuse to fall into the rut of reason. For instance, set a poet to studying math. He will

Byron springs to mind. I quote:

He was her logarithm,
She was his cosine.
Taking their dog with 'em,
They hastened to go sign
Marriage vows which they joyfully shared,
And wooed and wed and pi r squared.

Similarly, when a freshman girl named Elizabeth Barrett Sigafoos came to Dr. Ewbank to seek guidance, he ignored the fact that she had won the Pulitzer prize for poetry when she was eight, and insisted she major in mathematics. Again the results were startling. Miss Sigafoos has set the entire math department agog by flatly refusing to believe that six times nine is 54. If Miss Sigafoos is correct, we will have to re-think the entire science of numbers and—who knows?—possibly open up vistas as yet undreamed of in mathematics.

Dr. Ewbank's unorthodox approach to student guidance has so impressed his employers that he was fired last week. He is currently selling beaded moccasins at Mount Rushmore.

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